



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

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SBA Honors Nation's Small Business Leaders at National Entrepreneurial Conference & Expo: September 17-19

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Small Business Administration will host a gathering of America's top entrepreneurs to celebrate the strength and vitality of the nation's small business sector and honor the National Small Business Person of the Year for 2003 during ceremonies planned for mid-September in Washington, D.C.

"The spirit of entrepreneurialism is the spirit of America, and it has added incredible strength to our national fabric," said Administrator Hector V. Barreto. "That's what the National Entrepreneurial Conference is all about – drawing attention to the contributions of America's small businesses."

The conference follows a series of events in local communities across the nation honoring state Small Business Persons of the Year in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam. A national Small Business Person of the Year and runners-up will be announced from among the individual state winners. The state winners represent a diverse cross section of America, and their businesses range from microbrewers to fire engine manufacturers to motorcycle dealers to home nursing services.

This year's celebration – part of the SBA's 50th anniversary observance – also will include a trade show, procurement matchmaking, business sessions, a town hall meeting, and award ceremonies where state and national small-business winners will be recognized. Other sessions will include speakers from industry and government with a focus on issues of interest to the small business community.

Another special feature of the conference will be the unveiling of SBA's "Hall of Fame," where the agency will honor successful, nationally known companies that got started with the help of SBA-backed financing.

The SBA also will honor individuals who have distinguished themselves by their advocacy on behalf of minority, women and veteran-owned small businesses. Advocacy awards also go to a small business journalist, a researcher, and a financial services advocate.

Other special awards include the SBA Young Entrepreneur of the Year, Small Business Exporter of the Year and the SBA Entrepreneurial Success Award, which goes to a company that has developed into a large business with SBA assistance. An award to the National SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) Chapter of the Year will also be given.

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The Phoenix Awards recognize a public official, a business owner and a volunteer whose efforts have enabled their businesses or communities to recover successfully from a disaster. Four financial institutions will be honored as Export Lenders of the Year for their efforts in financing small business exporters.

SBA will award a number of honors in the area of federal contracting. Those awards include:

- *Dwight D. Eisenhower Award for Excellence*, recognizing large prime contractors that have excelled in their utilization of small businesses as suppliers and subcontractors.
- *Gold Star Award*, recognizing the exemplary performance of federal personnel who carry out the aggressive goals and strategic initiatives that help ensure a role for small business in the federal marketplace.
- *Frances Perkins Vanguard Award*, honoring government and industry for excellence in the use of women-owned small businesses as prime contractors and subcontractors.
- *Small Business Prime Contractor and Small Business Subcontractor of the Year*, honoring small businesses that have provided the government and industry with outstanding goods and services either as prime contractors or as subcontractors.

A list of this year's state and regional winners is located on SBA's Web site at <http://www.sba.gov/50/winners.html>.

*For more information about SBA's programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800 U ASK SBA or TDD 704-344-6640 or visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov. The SBA, in co-sponsorship with Staples, has introduced an online newsletter **SBA Solutions**. For a free subscription, go to <http://web.sba.gov/list> and select New **SBA Solutions Newsletter**.*

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